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MANOEL DE OLIVEIRA
PORTUGAL'S MASTER FILMMAKER

November 9-25, 1984

Sunday, November 11 at 2:30 (TITUS 2)
Friday, November 16 at 6:00 (TITUS 1)

RITE OF SPRING (a.k.a. THE PASSION OF JESUS/ACTO DA PRIMAVERA). 1963. Production, direction, photography (Eastmancolor), editing, sound: Manoel de Oliveira. Inspired by the Passion Play of Francisco Vaz de Guimarães. Consultants: Padre José Carvalhais, S.J., and José Regio. Assistants: António Reis, António Soares, and Domingos Carneiro. Costumes: Jayme Valverde. Sound Assistants: Fernando Jorge, Maria Isabel de Oliveira. In Portuguese with English subtitles. 94 min.

With the people of Curalha (Trás-os-Montes), including Nicolau da Silva as Jesus and Ermelinda Pires as the Virgin Mary.

"THE PASSION OF JESUS is the film version of the Passion Play enacted by the people of Curalha outdoors each year during Holy Week. No wonder that this filmic interpretation of some passages from the Gospels as presented by the simple people in their Passion Play should create mixed reactions. The film surprises, moves, and is of an extraordinary beauty; time will preserve its value and its contemporaneity. No matter how controversial the thought and world view of Manoel de Oliveira may be, his seriousness merits respect if not admiration. Because what he portrays here openly, no one among us has ever dared to say, either directly or indirectly. And I'll go even one step further: THE PASSION OF JESUS is the first political film from Portugal. Because what was done to Jesus was a political act."

--- Henrique Alves Costa, Portuguese critic

"....it was twenty years before Oliveira returned to feature production with THE PASSION OF JESUS. In interviews, he often speaks of his progress towards an ideal fusion of documentary and fiction, and it is fascinating to see how the short films lead into this profoundly disturbing re-creation of the Passion Play.... The film opens in a rather static, theatrical style. Then Oliveira gradually increases tempo, camera movement and the actual texture and density of the images so that, as the Crucifixion approaches, the film ceases to be a mummies' play performed by willing amateurs and takes on a strange, ancient, hieratic force, far removed from its Christian roots or the commercialised representations of other cinemas. Oliveira's imagery, and he is again the cameraman, seems entirely at the service of these extraordinary village players, caught up in the drama and delivering the text in tones ranging from song to throaty declamation and high-pitched wailing."

--- John Gillett in Sight and Sound, Summer, 1981

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